



FIRE and the **BLM**

*walking the
tightwire*



Since the beginning of time, wildfires

have raged through our nation's forests and rangelands.

Ironically, while fire can destroy these areas, it can also renew them.

The wildfire that kills thousands of old sagebrush plants stimulates other species, like bluebunch wheat grass, to sprout.

In the old days, wildfires burned in sparsely populated areas and didn't cause much harm to anybody or anything. It was usually rain or snow that put the fires out.

But as America's population grew, so did the need to control wildfires.

In 1936, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) started to fight fires on the 270 million acres of public land under our jurisdiction.

Over the last six decades, BLM has pioneered the development of techniques and technology that have reduced the devastating impacts of fire and established the agency as a world leader in wildland firefighting.

Yet we recognize that fire has always been a fundamental part of natural ecosystems and that without it, the health of our nation's forests and rangelands would be jeopardized.

Balancing the needs of the people we serve with the needs of the environment is the goal of BLM's Fire Management Program.

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Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management



When the heat is on

To us, the time period from April through September is more than just spring and summer - it's "fire season," when most wildfires on public lands occur.

While BLM maintains a small crew of fire managers, the vast majority of firefighters are seasonal employees hired during the dry summer months.

Many of these men and women return year after year to fight fire across the country - from the fragile tundra of Alaska's interior to the majestic forests of Oregon and California to the vast deserts of the southwest.

Our firefighters reflect the rich cultural diversity of our population, with women and minorities well represented.



BLM firefighters have developed a reputation for being among the best in the world.

Their mission varies with time and place but their main goal is always to protect life, property, and precious natural resources such as rangeland, wildlife habitat, fisheries, timber, recreation areas, historic sites, and cultural artifacts.

Thanks to these courageous men and women, loss of life and damage to property and natural resources

due to wildfires has remained low.



The environment needs fire, sometimes

Protecting lives, property, and natural resources does not mean eliminating fire from the environment.

In fact, BLM deliberately sets an average of 700 fires each year that burn about 70,000 acres of land.

These "prescribed" fires are carefully planned and conducted by trained specialists.

Prescribed fire benefits forests and rangelands in many ways. For instance, prescribed fire:

- improves habitat for livestock and wildlife
- helps forests regenerate
- and prevents heavy fuel accumulation that leads to large wildfires

Prescribed burning allows fire to play its natural role in the environment under controlled conditions. The key is deciding when, where and how much fire is needed.

**Where the
leaves meet
the eaves**

BLM Library
Denver Federal Center
Bldg 50, CC-521
P.O. Box 25047
Denver CO 80225

We call this place the "wildland urban interface."

That's a complicated term that simply means areas where homes and subdivisions are built in, or adjacent to, wildlands.

The number of these areas has skyrocketed over the last few years as more and more people try to escape urban America.

What many people who move to these areas don't realize is that fire protection is usually not provided by full-time, year-round fire departments.

Homeowners in wildland areas are responsible for reducing fire hazards on their property.

There are lots of simple things you can do to protect your home - like installing a fire proof



roof, storing firewood away from the house, and creating a fuel break around your property.

You can also take steps to reduce fire hazards when designing and building your home.

We'd be happy to help make your home more "fire safe." Call your nearest BLM office for more information.

**Preventing
wildfires
is up to you!**

Many of the wildfires that consume America's public lands each year are caused by people who "didn't mean to." Here are some ways you can help protect our natural resources:

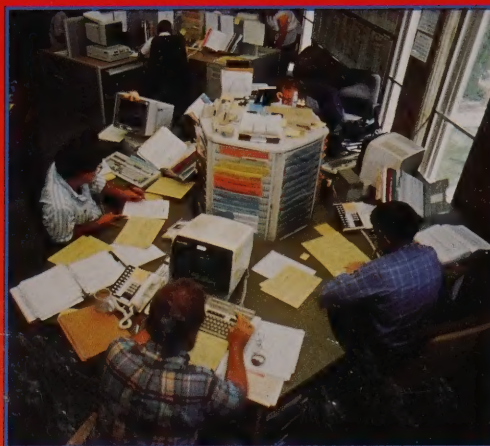


- Find out about area fire conditions and special fire restrictions that may be in effect when you visit public lands.
- Clear the area around your campfire - make sure the fire is "dead out" before you leave.
- Don't park on dry grass or brush.
- Keep a shovel or bucket on hand.
- Put charcoal briquets in a fire proof bucket.
- Use approved spark arresters on chain saws and off-road vehicles.

With a little help from our friends

We work closely with other Federal agencies including the U.S. Forest Service, the National Park Service, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs, as well as many state and local organizations, to coordinate fire-fighting.

Sharing resources ensures that agencies get the help they need when they need it. It is not unusual to find a Forest Service helicopter transporting BLM firefighters to a wildfire in a National Park.



The National Interagency Coordination Center (NICC), housed at the National Interagency Fire Center in Boise, Idaho, mobilizes and allocates resources for wild-land firefighting agencies across the country.

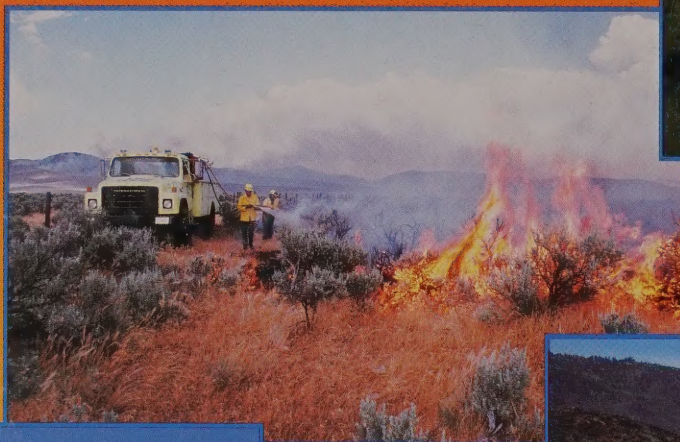
When local resources are exhausted, the NICC rallies vast numbers of firefighters, supplies, equipment, and air-craft and sends them to the fire within hours.

In extremely severe fire seasons, the military may be asked to help. Over the last few years, soldiers have proven their ability to become highly effective firefighters within a short period of time.

Tools of the trade

Engine

BLM's main weapon in the "initial attack" phase, when fires first start



Fire shelter

This "tin foil tent" will save the life of a firefighter overrun by wildfire



Smokejumper

BLM's parachuting fire-fighters snuff blazes in the most remote areas of the country



Handcrews

The "infantry" of BLM's fire forces, these men and women construct fireline to control blazes. Their distinctive green pants and yellow shirts are made of "nomex," a fire resistant material.